

CHIEF JOSEPH

lesson in
LEADERSHIP
and DISCIPLINE



CHIEF JOSEPH

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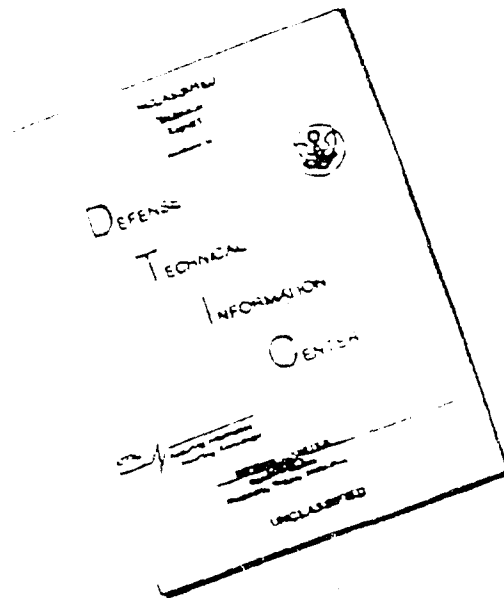


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Hq US Army Infantry Center, Fort Benning, Georgia, 4 October 1962


TO: See Distribution

1. Forwarded for action pursuant to page 3, Inclosure 2, Letter, AJIIN, this headquarters, subject: "Troop Information Plan - Second Quarter FY 63," 11 June 1962.

2. This communication is effective until 1 January 1963 unless sooner rescinded or superseded.

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THOMAS C. ADAMS
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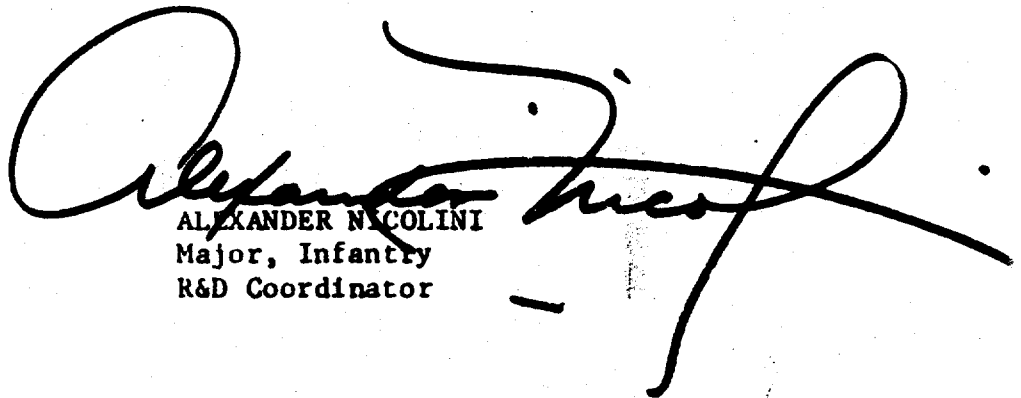
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19 September 1962

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TO: Commanders of Organizations Indicated
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The attached Troop Topic is a presentation as outlined in paragraph 7 and Inclosure 3 to letter, AJAIN, this headquarters, 8 August 1962, subject: "Troop Information Plan - Second Quarter, FY 1963."

FOR THE COMMANDER:

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J. B. ALESSIE
2d Lt, AGC
Assistant Adjutant General

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THIRD UNITED STATES ARMY TROOP TOPIC

Headquarters Third United States Army
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CHIEF JOSEPH - LESSON IN LEADERSHIP AND DISCIPLINE

INTRODUCTION

One of the most celebrated names in Indian history is that of Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce -- a man whose character and military strategy have long been chronicled in the annals of the Old West, related around campfires, and recorded by Army officers and other writers of military history.

The Nez Perce Indians were given their name -- which meant "pierced noses" -- by the French, from the fact that in the early days of their tribal history they wore rings in their noses. At the time the white people of the United States began their association with this tribe, "Old Chief Joseph", father of the celebrated Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce, was its leader. The tribe occupied a beautiful area in what is now Oregon, Idaho and Washington.

With the coming of the whites, the Indians were solicited by the Government to cede their domain and move to a reservation. The Indians were stoutly opposed to this idea and valiant "Old Chief Joseph" scorned the requests of the white man, saying that the Nez Perce loved their country and would never consent to give it up.

The white man, however, was persistent in his efforts. Employing tactics that had been effective with other Indian tribes, he induced some of the minor chiefs of the Nez Perce to enter into a series of treaties -- in 1855, in 1863, and in 1868 -- by which the Indians were to cede all of their domain except a small reservation in Idaho known as the Lapwai lands. Here, the white man said, the Nez Perce were to settle.

Since Old Chief Joseph was not a party to these treaties, he refused to be bound by them. He was an old man -- and on his deathbed he took the hand of his son and said to him: "My son, my body is returning to my mother earth, and my spirit is going very soon to see the Great Spirit Chief. When I am gone, think of your country. You are the chief of these people. They look to you to guide them. Always remember that your father never sold his country. You must stop your ears whenever you are asked to sign a treaty selling your home. My son, never forget my dying words. This country holds your father's body. Never sell the bones of your father and your mother."

This son's name was also Joseph -- the great Chief Joseph of Indian history.

This Troop Topic discusses the Nez Perce tribe, their country, and their leader; the events leading to the war between the United States and the Nez Perce; the tribe's heroic retreat to immortality; and the outstanding leadership displayed by their chief during this retreat.

THE NEZ PERCE - THEIR LAND AND LEADERS

THE TRIBE

The name Shahaptan is not a particularly familiar one, but it was the name of a great family of tribes that occupied the Pacific Northwest before the coming of the white man. The best known tribes of Shahaptans were the Klikitat, Umatilla, Yakima, Wallawalla and Nez Perce Indians. Of these tribes, the most famous by far was the Nez Perce.

As previously stated, the members of the Nez Perce tribe were called "stuck noses" because it was their custom, in earlier times, to pierce the septum of the nose for ornaments and rings. This was a convenient characterization, since in the Indian sign language, the Nez Perce could be easily referred to by passing the extended finger under the nose. Anyone could properly interpret the sign.

The Nez Perce tribe, while the people were alike and were one in feeling, was composed of several independent, confederated tribes. The most common method used by the white settlers for identifying them was to divide them into the Upper and Lower Nez Perce. The chief of the Lower Nez Perce at the coming of the white man was Old Chief Joseph. Old Joseph was a deeply religious man and an individual who continually strove to maintain peace with the white man. The chief of the Upper Nez Perce was Big Thunder. He also attempted to maintain peace, and in so doing, entered into various treaties with the Indian Agents which resulted in the lands of both tribes being turned over to the Government and the Upper Tribe being removed to a reservation.

The Lower Nez Perce were a nomadic people. They were intelligent, religious, and industrious, and were always ready and willing to work to help themselves. They made no pottery, but were known as "stone boilers"; that is, their food was cooked in baskets treated to make them water-tight, or in holes in rocks, by dropping hot stones into the containers of liquid. The making of fine baskets was their chief craft. At one time Nez Perce baskets were highly prized by collectors and some of these baskets may still be found in museums throughout the country. Both coiled and twined baskets were produced in the area, their unique feature being a method of ornamentation designated as "imbrication" -- one decorative layer overlapping another, like fish scales.

The Nez Perce did no other weaving except rabbitskin blankets which consisted of rabbit skins cut into long strips and woven into rectangular pieces. These blankets were used both as bedding and as robes. Otherwise, these Indians wore clothing made from the hides of large animals such as deer, elk and buffalo.

The country of the Nez Perce was rich in vegetable foods, especially edible roots. The Nez Perce were noted for their ability to subsist, when necessary, on root digging. The most important root staple was the camas, a bulbous root gathered in large quantities and roasted in pits. When not eaten

at once, the roasted bulbs were pounded into mash, made into loaves, cooked again and then stored for future use. The roots of the kouse, a plant similar to the camas, were available when the camas could not be harvested. There were many other edible roots available to the Indians such as bitter root, carum and wild carrot.

The country of the Nez Perce was also rich in wild berries which, sun dried, formed an important food reserve. About the only wild seed used by the tribes was that of the sunflower. In times of extreme food shortage, lichens, the inner barks of pine trees, and pine nuts were eaten.

The tributaries of the Columbia River and the many small rivers draining into the Pacific Ocean are the favorite spawning waters for salmon. Three varieties of salmon were available to the Nez Perce, and since these varieties did not all run at the same time, there were several periods during the year when ample supplies of fish could be had for the taking. The surplus fish were dried, smoked and stored for the future. Spear-fishing was the most common method used by the Indians. They had nothing that approximated the modern fish hook, but they did have dip nets and seines.

Horses probably reached the Nez Perce Indians about 1700. (Contrary to popular belief, horses are not native to the Americas, but were brought to this hemisphere by the early Spanish conquistadors.) The coming of the horse resulted in the same effect on the Nez Perce housing habits as had been the case with the buffalo-hunting or plains Indians. The tepee used by the plains Indians was adopted by the Nez Perce when traveling with horses. As permanent residences, long, many-family structures were built. These were A-shaped structures composed of frameworks of poles covered with mats. The tops were open so that smoke from the long row of family fires down the middle could escape into the open air.

Little is known about the dress of the Nez Perce before the advent of the white man, but, when first known, the men wore moccasins, leggings, breechcloth, shirt and blanket -- all made from animal hides. The Nez Perce men seem to have worn full dress regularly, instead of only on gala occasions, as among other Indians. The women dressed in skins too, wearing long, loose gowns similar to those worn by the plains Indians.

The nomadic tribal characteristics of the Nez Perce were used to great advantage in their heroic retreat to the border of Canada.

LAND OF THE NEZ PERCE

Among the Indians, the Lower Nez Perce were conceded to own the country south and east of the Blue Mountains and west of the Snake River, and as far south as the Powder River, a tributary of the Snake. It is true that other bands had the privilege of hunting and fishing there, just as the Lower Nez Perce had the privilege of roaming or camping in the upper country, but the right of control of the respective sections was never disputed between the Indian bands.

The Lower Nez Perce Indians moved to the upper country when Dr. Henry Spaulding and his wife established a school for Indians on Lapwai Creek, east of what is now Lewiston, Idaho, in 1836. Dr. Spaulding set out seeds in the hope of interesting the Indians in agriculture. Apple trees were planted, irrigation and power ditches were made and used, and a small grist and saw mill was built and operated. The first printing press in the Oregon country was brought to Lapwai by pack horse and set up to print a primer, a hymn book, and the Gospel of Saint Matthew in the Nez Perce language. The Lower Nez Perce stayed in the area for a while, but soon unfriendly feelings developed between the Upper and Lower tribes and Old Chief Joseph was ordered to return to his own land by Chief Big Thunder, and he did so.

Old Joseph and his people loved their country. It was not the most attractive region in the world to the white man, but it suited the Indians. On one side the Snake River surged over its Rocky bed; on the other side the Blue Mountains rose majestically. Along the western base the Grande Ronde River swept through its great arc to the Snake. Within these boundaries was a rugged country impossible to cultivate. Through it, toward the east, ran the Imaha River, down a narrow vale; through it toward the northwest, flowed the Mallova River -- the "Winding Waters" -- with a valley larger and better than any other stream in that area. The valley of this river was the very best of the land claimed by the Nez Perce.

A Captain Whipple, Indian Agent, reported in 1875: "The valley is only fit for stock raising, as a business, and not desirable for that in consequence of long winters; but the Indian horses could live through it while the white man's cattle would perish." Captain Whipple went on to say, "The average American is not, as a rule, slow to take advantage of eligible openings to secure land claims, but none seem to want the land in the Mallova Valley." Nevertheless, this particular territory was soon to play a most important part in the termination of a long history of friendly relations between the Nez Perce and the United States Government.

NEZ PERCE LEADERS

A strange man was Old Chief Joseph; a sturdy, strong-built man, with a will of iron and a foresight that never failed him. He had some strong notions too, one of which was that "no man owned any part of the earth, and a man could not sell what he did not own." His idea was that ownership of land should be limited to occupancy.

Old Joseph and the Nez Perce Indians had been on friendly terms with the white man for many years. Their call for missionaries; their support of the settlers against the overbearing Hudson's Bay Company; their offer of protection to the white settlement at Lapwai when Dr. Whiteman, a missionary, was murdered by the Cayuse Indians; their protection and escort of Governor I. I. Stevens' party on its visit to the Indians in Washington Territory in 1858; and their assistance to U. S. troops against hostile Indians, are all recorded in the history of the West. They gave the famous Lewis and Clark expedition a reception which brought joy to the hearts of the weary explorers. They

furnished them with food and then refused pay for it, and they looked after their horses and property while the expedition went down the river, returning them safely in the spring.

It is true that there was some difference of opinion among these Indians in regard to adopting the white man's religion and ways, but none as to being his friends. History records that over a period of 100 years only one white man was killed by the Nez Perce, and that was a case of manslaughter which occurred in 1862.

In the early 1840s, a son was born to Old Joseph. His name was In-ihut-Too-Yah-Lat-Lat, which meant "Thunder-Traveling-Over-the-Mountains." To the Americans, he was known as Young Chief Joseph. To the world, since 1877, he has been known as Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce, the "Red Napoleon of the West."

Young Joseph was six feet in height, well built, of serious nature and noble countenance. He was grave and thoughtful, as becomes a ruler. He was shrewd and cautious, as becomes one who transacts business for a nation. He was exact and resolute, as becomes one who must preserve peace between two factions prone to misunderstanding. He was a man of sound reason and good judgment; both important qualities in the make up of a good leader.

Nearest and dearest to Joseph, after the death of his father, was one of his brothers, Ol-La-Cut. This brother was a little younger than Joseph and was tall, handsome and gay in nature. Both of the youths attended Mrs. Spaulding's mission school. It appears that the good seed which was sown in the school ripened into good deeds later. Their training in the mission school could account for at least a part of their honorable conduct when war came.

As time went on, white men became more numerous in the West. They came to Nez Perce country to hunt for gold and many of them remained there. Young Chief Joseph ruled his people so wisely that no warfare occurred during the gold-seeking period.

BACKGROUND FOR WAR

THE TREATIES OF 1855 AND 1863

For all the favors the Lower Nez Perce tribe had rendered to the white man, it asked only one in return: to be allowed to keep the land of their forefathers, Wallowa Valley, in eastern Oregon.

The Lower Nez Perce never intentionally signed any treaty with the white man or entered into any negotiations with him that would allow him to take claim to their ancestral home between the Grande Ronde and Snake Rivers.

The Upper Nez Perce did sell their land, with the exception of the Lapwai Reservation, and inadvertently became the media through which the Lower Nez Perce finally lost their Wallowa Valley holdings.

It came about this way: In 1855, Old Chief Joseph, in conjunction with other Nez Perce chieftains, did sell certain western lands to the white man with the understanding that such lands as were not sold by this instrument would be held by the Indians -- all Nez Perce tribes -- as common property. By joining in the Treaty of 1855, Old Joseph acknowledged the existence of a general tribal organization, and for this reason the tribe had authority to bind him later, in 1863, when a majority of the chiefs, counting all of the bands together, sold all of their land except the Lapwai Reservation. By this means, they sold Joseph's land also.

There was never any pretense that the Upper Nez Perce actually intended to sell the land of the Lower tribe, nor did it ever claim the power to do so. Further, there is nothing in the records to indicate that the Government commissioners at the time felt that they were purchasing Lower Nez Perce land. It does not appear that anyone, white or Indian, understood that the Treaty of 1863 included the sale of the Wallowa Valley.

Old Joseph went to his grave in 1871, in blissful ignorance of the fact that the land he loved and claimed was not his land. Captain Whipple stated that "uniformly and with violence, to his last hour, he (Old Joseph) asserted to his children and friends that he had never surrendered his claim to this (Wallowa) Valley, but that he left it to them as their inheritance, with the injunction never to barter it away."

So Young Joseph, acting on his father's word, continued to remain in northeastern Oregon, even though, legally, the territory no longer belonged to his tribe.

In September 1875, General Oliver O. Howard, US Army Commander of the Department of the Columbia, reported to his superiors: "I think it a great mistake to take from Joseph and his band of Nez Perce Indians that (Wallowa) valley. The white people really don't want it. I think gradually this valley will be abandoned by the white people, and possibly Congress can be induced to let these really peaceable Indians have this poor valley for their own."

The suggestion contained in this report was turned down, and General Howard was ordered by the Department of the Interior to place the Nez Perce on the Lapwai Reservation. Howard met with the tribe and found out -- as he must have anticipated -- that the Indians were unwilling to be relocated.

General Howard held three councils with the Nez Perce, the last on 7 May 1877.

FACING THE INEVITABLE

There were a number of reasons why the Nez Perce Indians objected to being moved to a reservation. The first, of course, being that they preferred their own country.

Second, these nomadic Indians did not want to be hampered in their movements from one place to another. They knew that going on a reservation meant staying there except for such journeys as might be sanctioned by the white man's government.

The third reason that the Nez Perce did not want to go to Lapwai was that their chief wealth was in their bands of horses, and these they knew they would have to give up if they moved to a reservation. (The Nez Perce Indians are credited with having developed the breed of stock horses we now know as the Appaloosa.) On the reservations, 20 acres of land were allotted to each head of a family.

Obviously, running horse bands on such limited acreage was out of the question.

In spite of their objections to reservation life, it soon became clear to the Lower Nez Perce tribe that they were going to have to move. Reminding his tribe that it had never fought against the white man, Chief Joseph stated, "I said in my heart that rather than have war, I would give up my country. I would give up my father's grave. I would give up everything rather than have the blood of the white man upon the hands of my people."

Thus, apparently, the Nez Perce resigned themselves to the inevitable. On 14 May 1877, the Government gave the tribe 30 days to gather up its belongings and move. The Indians began their preparations.

THE NEZ PERCE WAR

THE DECISION TO RESIST

To all intents and purposes, the matter of moving the Lower Nez Perce Indians to Lapwai was a closed issue. Chief Joseph had stated that he would not fight the white man, the Government had set a resettlement date, and the Indians were preparing to meet that date.

When the white man's councils had been ended and the Indians were brought at last face to face with the grave issues involved in giving up many of the possessions they had long loved and cherished -- not the least of which was the Wallowa Valley territory -- they began to take a new look at the Government order to move. They had 30 days to complete their packing; 30 days in which to decide what could be moved and what must be left behind or disposed of.

It would appear that as much time was spent around the council fires as was spent in making preparations for the journey northeastward to Lapwai. At each tribal council the desire to resist the move grew stronger among the warriors. Chief Joseph stoutly defended his decision not to fight. Nevertheless, he was over-ruled by a majority vote of the tribesmen to fight the soldiers when they came to escort the Indians to their new home.

During the council meetings, a part of the tribe opposed including the settlers in any action against the white man's army. This group felt that the settlers would remain neutral and would make good neighbors when the issue

was finally settled. Again, however, a majority ruled in the opinion that it was the settlers who had brought about the Nez Perce difficulties to start with, and that they should be retaliated against in any action which might have to be taken in connection with holding the Wallowa Valley.

Packing stopped and entrenchment activities began. Although Chief Joseph had counseled peace with the white men, he felt that war was inevitable and joined his tribesmen. He did not relinquish his rights as a leader. Instead, he took charge of the preparations for resistance and attempted to make up for the Nez Perce deficiency in numbers by developing rapidity of movement and maneuverability of position among his warriors. Joseph had no intention of meeting the U. S. troops with a wild, undisciplined band of savages. He made his fighters practice military movements until they became proficient in them.

A General Shanks who was a member of the Indian Commission, stated later that "Joseph's party was thoroughly disciplined; they rode at a full gallop along the mountain side in a steady formation by fours; formed twos at a given signal with perfect precision to cross a narrow bridge; then galloped into a line, reined in to a sudden halt and dismounted with as much system as Regulars."

On 13 June 1877, the 30-day "preparation period" was over, but the soldiers did not arrive to escort the Indians to the reservation. Instead, over on the Salmon River, three Nez Perce Indians killed an old hermit. On the morning of the 14th, they killed three more settlers -- and in the afternoon, they killed still another. Mounted on the horses of their victims, they hurried to the Camas Prairie where the main body of the Nez Perce were camped, and rode through the camp displaying the spoils of their bloodshed as they called on others to join them.

Unfortunately, Chief Joseph and his brother Ol-La-Cut were not in camp. They had set their tepees at some distance away due to the illness of Joseph's wife. White Bird, who stood next to Joseph in rank and influence, gave way to the rising hysteria and himself rode through the camp yelling, "All must join now. There is blood! You will be punished if you delay!"

In all, only 17 warriors joined the original three marauders as they turned back toward the Salmon River. They killed eight more settlers on the way. During the night, another war party slipped out of the camp to attack the people of Cottonwood House -- a ranch on the road between Mount Idaho and Fort Lapwai -- as they tried to escape to Mount Idaho. All whites in the party were killed.

Chief Joseph, who had continually protested against hostilities, knew now that there would be no way to avoid open conflict. Returning to the main camp he took control of the situation and ordered the tribe to move to a good defensive position in White Bird Canyon. Here, he prepared to make a stand against the troops.

FIRST BATTLE

The Nez Perce, arrayed for battle, did not have long to wait for the arrival of U. S. military forces. A detachment of 90 men put out quickly from Fort

Lapwai. Upon reaching Grangeville, four miles from Mount Idaho, on the evening of 16 June, the company was joined by 10 civilians. Together they marched on through the night to White Bird Canyon, 16 miles away. Reaching the head of the canyon at daybreak, they began their descent of the broad trail, intending to surprise the Indians and prevent their escape across the Salmon River.

Down in the canyon, Chief Joseph observed the approach through his spy-glass. A party of mounted warriors was dispatched to an ambush site behind a hill on the south side of the canyon. In true guerrilla fashion, the rest of the Indians, under Joseph, were crouched on the ground, squarely across the trail, but hidden behind rocks. The soldiers were allowed to proceed well within range, then every rock and bush poured forth fire. At the same time, the party of mounted warriors came into the clear to the left of the column of soldiers.

The foremost ranks of the troopers deployed to engage the force in front, and the rear wheeled to meet the flank movement. Men were falling; the Indians were moving on the hills, making toward the rear. The gallant troopers fell back to the next ridge, but this was soon taken by the Indians. The Indians were pressing along the sides of the canyon to gain its head and cut off retreat. Part of the command reached the ascent and hurried out -- the remainder were cut off. The Indians were upon them in a moment, thinning their ranks with murderous fire, through which only a few were able to make their way to the summit. The Indians pursued the troops for approximately 12 miles, but by that time the officers had regrouped their men and the soldiers retired in good order.

Chief Joseph, through good leadership and discipline, and by employing superior tactics, had fought and won his first battle with the white man.

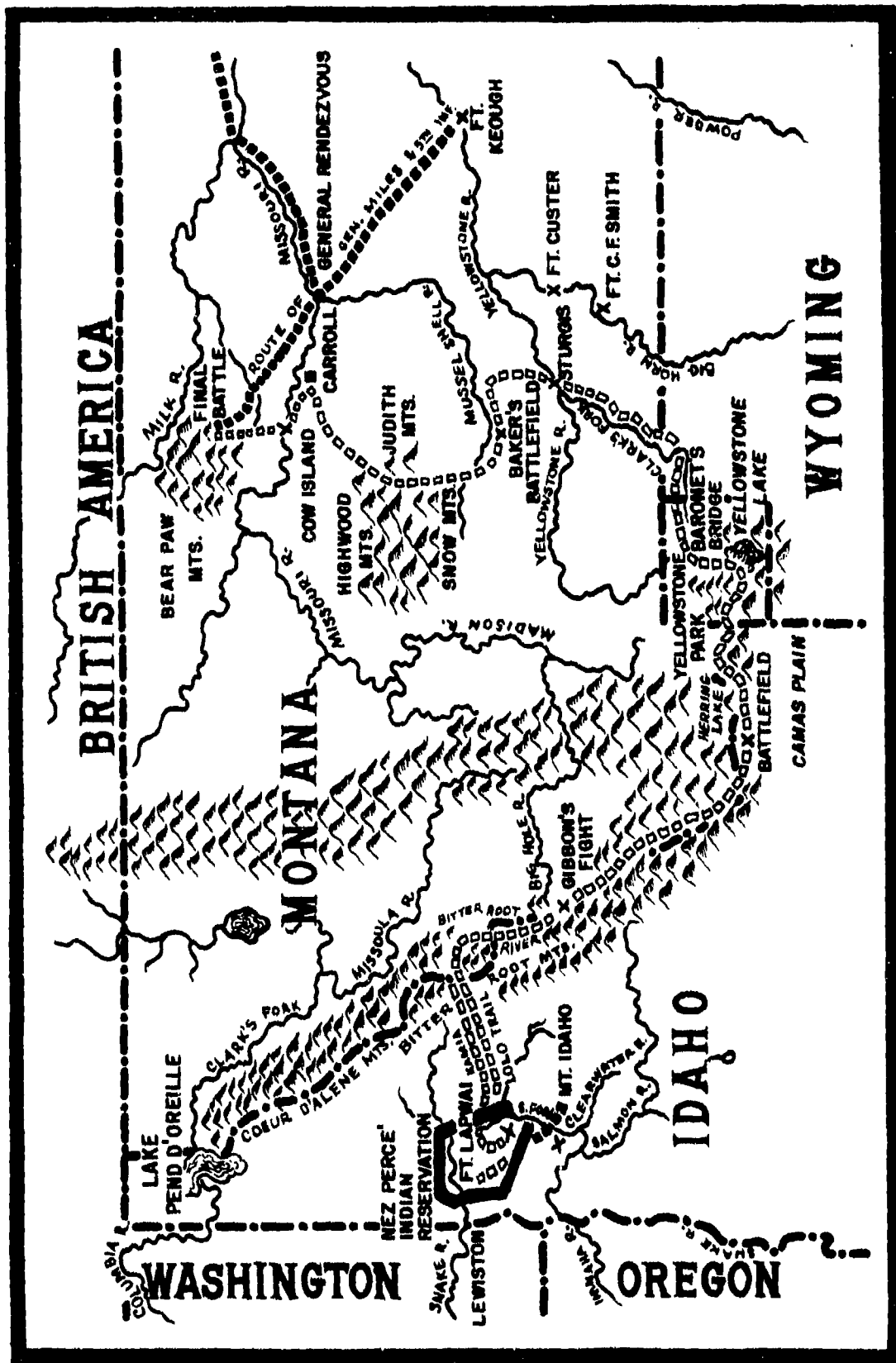
THE SECOND BATTLE

The Indian victory came as a complete surprise to the whites. No one had really expected the Indians to fight. The initial raids conducted by the Nez Perce had been interpreted by the settlers as just an outburst of anger. The last thing, perhaps, that the military leaders had anticipated was that the Nez Perce would enter any battle as well-organized, well-disciplined troops instead of sniping, marauding bands of unorthodox killers.

Recognizing a foe worthy of his best efforts, General Howard took to the field with approximately 400 troops, a howitzer, and two gatling guns. Chief Joseph had only about 300 warriors, with the squaws of the tribe acting as assistants. This band consisted of a small group under Too-Hul-Hul-Sute, the Medicine Man; a larger group under a warrior called Looking Glass, and two more units under warriors Five Wounds and Rainbow. In top command, of course, was Chief Joseph.

On 11 July 1877, General Howard and his assembled troops were in sight of the Indians who had crossed the country to the Lapwai reservation and taken a position on the Clearwater River. With sure instinct, they had chosen

CHIEF JOSEPH'S RETREAT



a site from which they could oppose Howard's crossing, or withdraw if need be, in any direction. "No General," General Howard wrote later, "Could have chosen a safer position, or one more likely to puzzle and obstruct the foe."

As the soldiers advanced to engage the enemy, they left two supply trains behind, unguarded. Chief Joseph took quick note of the situation and dispatched 30 warriors to attack the trains. The spy-glass (telescope) of one of the Army officers caught this movement just in a nick of time. A messenger was sent back to hurry the trains into the lines, and a troop of cavalry galloped to their defense. The Indians, however, were first to reach the smaller wagon train, and before they could be driven off they had killed two packers and disabled their animals. The larger train was able to reach the battle line with no damage.

All afternoon the battle raged, with its charges and countercharges, its feinting and fighting. Through the night, both parties were busy strengthening their breastworks and at the same time engaging in sporadic sniping at the enemy.

On the morning of 12 July, the battle was renewed with little advantage to either side until the middle of the afternoon when a fresh troop of cavalry appeared to reinforce Howard. This brought Howard's total strength to approximately 700 men.

The artillery moved back to meet the new unit and, having made a junction with it, they struck the enemy line on the left and charged down on it. The Indians fought stubbornly, but finally gave way before the terrific onslaught. The victorious troops pressed them so hotly that the artillery was in range of the Indian camp before the Nez Perce could strike their tepees.

Seeking safety in retreat, the Indians were able to effect an escape with their horse bands and sufficient supplies for battle purposes. Before the troops could cross the river and take up the chase, however, a new contingent of Indians appeared on the right front, apparently bent on attack. While the soldiers made preparations to turn and receive this new force, the remainder of the Indians continued their flight, and when the preparations of the soldiers had been completed, they found that their new enemy had disappeared. Chief Joseph's feinting action had been completely successful.

In the morning, the troops continued their pursuit of the retreating Indians, still in sight from the heights, only to fall into an ambush set up by the Nez Perce rear-guard. The troops were thrown into utter confusion. Night found the Indians safely encamped in an almost impregnable position, at the entrance to the Lolo Trail.

Joseph had fought his second battle against heavy odds, and though beaten off, had brought his forces out of the conflict most favorably.

RETREAT TO IMMORTALITY

While Chief Joseph was encamped on the Lolo Trail, a detachment of soldiers was sent to cut off his retreat and attack him from the rear. But Joseph was not so easily trapped. The detachment was hardly under way before the wily chief broke camp and fell back beyond the danger point.

The Indians began a lonely trek up the Lolo Trail, across the Bitter Root Mountains, and down the Bitter Root River into Montana. At that time, any mountain trail was bad -- and Indian trails especially so. Sharp rocks, fallen timbers, slippery pitches and roaring torrents made the going rough, but, according to General William T. Sherman, the Lolo Trail was the worst of the lot. Said he, "This is universally admitted by all who have traveled it as one of the worst trails for man and beast on this continent."

The Nez Perce traversed it safely. They knew the country -- and they outmarched General Howard and escaped.

As they made their way out of the mountains into the Bitter Root Valley on 25 July 1877, the Nez Perce found their way blocked by a force of Regulars and volunteers, about 65 in all, under the command of Captain C. C. Rawn. Strongly entrenched and under orders to stop Joseph at all cost, Captain Rawn made ready to fight. Looking Glass, of the Nez Perce, talked to Captain Rawn and asked that the Indians be allowed to pass in peace. Rawn refused such passage, but the volunteer force under his command overrode his decision. The Nez Perce had always been known as "good" Indians in the Bitter Root country. The settlers there had never had any grounds for complaint against their actions as they had traveled back and forth through the area in previous years. The volunteers allowed the Nez Perce to pass in peace. Their claim was that they "had not lost any Indians and consequently were not hunting for any".

The Indians not only passed in peace, but traded with the white settlers along the way as well. In passing, they left behind a spy who stayed over in the little town of Corvallis until General Howard's troops passed through, then sped on his way to Chief Joseph with full particulars on the U. S. military forces.

In the meantime, Howard had telegraphed ahead to General John A. Gibbon, who was stationed near Helena, to cut the escape route of the Nez Perce. Gibbon hurriedly scraped together what forces he could muster -- approximately 17 officers, 132 cavalrymen, and 34 private citizens. He scouted the Indians, learned the location of their camp at Big Hole Basin, and attacked it at dawn. Within 20 minutes, the surprised Nez Perce were driven from the site, and Gibbon occupied it, planting a howitzer at the location.

Chief Joseph had trained his warriors well, and they did not retreat far before regrouping and counterattacking. The soldiers were completely surprised by the quick maneuvering of the Indians and were soon driven out of the camp. The Indians captured the howitzer and settled down to a furious, day-long battle of rifle fire from behind breastworks. By nightfall, the Nez Perce were exhausted and their forces crippled. They gathered their supplies and moved out of the camp voluntarily.

The Indians were not alone in their crippled condition. General Gibbon had been wounded in the battle as he fought beside his men, and the troops were wounded and weary. Six Medals of Honor were later awarded U. S. soldiers for gallantry in action during this particular engagement.

By Sunday, 19 August, Chief Joseph and his people had again crossed the Continental Divide into Idaho, and had made camp on the great Camas Prairie which lies west of what is now the National Park, on the Yellowstone River. The tribe had captured 250 good horses, replenished their supplies and put their forces in excellent condition.

General Howard's forces were only one day's march behind the Indians. They too, were camped on the Camas Prairie.

A detachment from Howard's command had been sent ahead to Tacher's Pass, the most accessible roadway across the divide into the park. The remainder of the troops slept peacefully, with sentinels and pickets properly posted, blissfully unaware of the dark forms creeping toward them through the open grass. Suddenly, off toward the east, the sentinels sighted a troop of about 40 horsemen riding toward the camp, back over the trail of the Nez Perce. They rode in a column of fours regularly, and without haste. The Army pickets thought they must be the Tacher's Pass detachment returning to camp. Actually, they were Indian riders bent on stampeding the Army's horses and mules! As the horsemen came within hailing distance they were challenged. Their answer betrayed their identity and the pickets opened fire. The answering Indian cry startled the soldiers from their sleep.

When the air cleared after a rapid exchange of small arms fire, it was found that all of the Army's horses and mules that had not been hobbled or staked out were scampering away into the night with the Indians in hot pursuit.

Fortunately, enough horses were left to mount three companies of cavalrymen, who immediately took off after the Indians. They recovered about 50 head of the loose animals, but by morning, the Indians had been able to return and stampede about half of these!

Following this foray, Chief Joseph continued his masterly retreat through Tacher's Pass by skillfully by-passing Howard's forward detachment.

Credit must be given to Joseph for the accomplishment of a most successful maneuver. By immobilizing Howard, the Indians were now free to move toward their goal. They turned east to cross the mountains, intending to turn north up the plains once they had cleared the mountain barrier. Their intended path would take them through Yellowstone National Park, across Baronet's Bridge, and over Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone. By this movement, Chief Joseph hoped to avoid Colonel Samuel D. Sturgis, who had been warned concerning Joseph, and who had come over from the Powder River country with six troops of cavalry -- 359 men -- and a number of friendly Crow Indian scouts.

On 13 September, Colonel Sturgis overtook the Nez Perce on the sagebrush plains across the Yellowstone River. The rear-guard of the Indian band

engaged the troops while the remainder of the tribe turned into the narrow valley of Canyon Creek. One detachment of troops, however, managed to circle around the fighting, and pressed the retreating band so closely that over 400 ponies had to be abandoned by the Indians.

All day the Indians dropped back, fighting for every foot of ground; at dark, the exhausted soldiers withdrew to camp at the mouth of the canyon. On the following day, Sturgis was reinforced by a large body of Crow Indians, who pressed the Nez Perce so vigorously that 500 more ponies had to be left behind. Nevertheless, Sturgis' forces were not able to move fast enough to close the gap between themselves and the Nez Perce.

The Indians retired up the Mussel Shell River and then, circling back of the Judith Mountains, crossed the Missouri River at Cow Island, the low water mark of the Upper Missouri. Here, the Indians attacked a small encampment of soldiers but withdrew after burning their supplies. Moving on to the north, Chief Joseph drove his people at a killing pace. Winter was coming and behind him were three pursuers: Howard, Gibbon and Sturgis. There was no time for the Indians or their ponies to rest.

At the end of September, the Nez Perce finally entered the Bear Paw Mountains in the north central part of what is now the State of Montana, and paused to rest, only one day's journey -- approximately 30 miles -- from their goal, the Canadian border. So far, they had managed to elude every force that had attacked them over their long journey, and now they felt that they were safe, at least for a while.

Unfortunately for the Indians, their worst enemy was one they could not see -- the telegraph. This new and invisible foe was soon to play a most important part in their downfall.

Colonel Nelson A. Miles (later to become Lieutenant General), having been notified of the position of the Indians by telegraph, was soon on his way from Fort Keogh with a force of three battalions of cavalry, a company and a half of infantry, a detachment of white and Indian scouts, a breech-loading Hotchkiss gun, and a Napoleon 12-pounder. Miles' total force consisted of about 375 men.

On the morning of 30 September 1877, the camp of the Indians was attacked by the soldiers. The Nez Perce knew of their coming only far enough in advance to allow the Indians to take shelter in the ravines of their encampment.

The horse band, numbering about 800 head, was cut off by a battalion of cavalry. The other two battalions, accompanied by the scouts, attacked the camp, but they had scarcely reached the Indian village before they were forced to draw back under heavy fire.

For four days and nights the forces faced each other. The soldiers appeared to have the situation under control, but they were reluctant to make another try at storming the Indian camp since this would obviously involve a

heavy loss of life. They did, however, have the Indians surrounded and were inflicting heavy damage on them with their artillery. The Indians could not escape through the lines without leaving behind their wounded, old women, and children, and this Chief Joseph steadfastly refused to do.

Chief Joseph's only hope by now was Sitting Bull, Chief of the Sioux Indians and an avowed enemy of the white man. Chief Joseph thought that the Sioux chief might come to his rescue as a result of the Sioux' hatred for the whites. Sitting Bull was, at the time, just over the border in Canada.

The besieged Nez Perce slipped out messengers to the Sioux telling them of their plight, and asking that the Sioux come to their rescue. As they waited for Sitting Bull, they improved their defenses on the ground and held their position, occasionally engaging in light skirmishes with the soldiers.

But Sitting Bull never came.

Realizing that he could no longer hold out unassisted, on the morning of 5 October 1877, Chief Joseph sent out a white flag. At sunset he rode out to meet Colonel Miles and General Howard, who had arrived on the scene only a few hours before.

Surrendering the remnant of his small but heroic band, Chief Joseph said, "I am tired of fighting. Our chiefs are killed. Looking Glass is dead. Too-hul-hul-Sute is dead. The old men are all dead. It is cold and we have no blankets. The little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them, have run to the hills and have no blankets, no food. No one knows where they are, perhaps freezing to death. I want to have time to look for my children and see how many I can find. Maybe I shall find them among the dead. Hear me, my chiefs, I am tired. My heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more, forever."

The surrender of Chief Joseph ended, in General Sherman's words, "One of the most extraordinary Indian wars of which there is any record. The Indians throughout displayed a courage and skill that elicited universal praise; they abstained from scalping, let captive women go free, did not commit indiscriminate murder of peaceful families, and fought with almost scientific skill, using advance and rear guards, skirmish lines and field fortifications."

His conqueror, Colonel Nelson A. Miles, said of Joseph: "He was the brightest type of Indian I have ever known, very handsome, kind and brave.... an orator and the idol of his tribe."

NEZ PERCE RESERVATIONS

MISSOURI RIVER COUNTRY

The surrender by Chief Joseph and his people was conditioned on their being allowed to return home and live on the Lapwai Reservation. Colonel Miles, who later became a close friend of the Nez Perce and a warm admirer of Chief Joseph, endeavored to have that condition complied with. However, an order

was issued by Washington in November 1877, to send all of the Nez Perce to the Missouri River country.

Miles reluctantly sent the whole band, numbering about 431 persons, as prisoners to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where they were delivered to an Indian Agent on 21 December 1877. The Agent, H. W. Jones of the Quapaw Indian Agency, put them on a train and took them south to Baxter Springs, Kansas, the same day. The next day the Indians and their belongings were loaded into wagons and moved to the Modoc Reservation, part of the Quapaw Lands near the agency headquarters in what is now the State of Oklahoma.

A few weeks later the agent purchased from the Peoria and Miami Indians, 7,000 acres of land as a home for Joseph and his band.

Chief Joseph, bitter because his tribe had not been allowed to return to his old environs, refused to commit himself by accepting the land which had been purchased for the tribe. It was his contention that his people would never consent to live there permanently.

A SECOND MOVE

Approximately two years after the Indians were placed on the Modoc Reservation, Chief Joseph accompanied an Indian Agent into the territory west of the Arkansas River to seek a permanent home for the Nez Perce. A tract of land encompassing four townships on the Ponca Reserve where the Chikaskia River emptied into the Salt Fork of the Arkansas was finally selected. The United States Congress passed a bill authorizing the purchase of this land, and the Nez Perce completed the 180 mile journey to their new home in nine days. They reported to the Ponca Agent, W. H. Whiteman, on 15 June 1879. The number of Nez Perce moving to the new reservation was 370, to include men, women and children.

Indian Agent Whiteman said that the Nez Perce were an intelligent, religious and industrious people, ready and willing to work to help themselves, and that if agricultural implements, farm animals, and seed were furnished them, they could do much toward becoming self-supporting. They made good gardens in which they raised melons, potatoes and other vegetables. They took excellent care of the 96 head of cattle issued them. The Indian Agent reported that they appeared to be natural herdsmen, and that they showed better judgment in the management of their stock than any other Indians he had ever known.

One hundred and twenty-four members of the tribe joined the Presbyterian Church, and the piety, universal attendance, attention, and general good conduct of these people elevated them in the eyes of the white settlers living in surrounding areas. Poor as they were, the Nez Perce contributed \$45 to buy lumber and other materials to build a house for their pastor.

BACK TO THE NORTHWEST

Even the new land could not replace the longing this band had for its homeland in the Lapwai Valley of Idaho. Love of country, as in all brave

peoples, was very strong in the Nez Perce.

In 1882, Thomas J. Jordan, who had replaced Whiteman as Indian Agent, strongly recommended to the Indian Department that the Nez Perce be returned to the Northwest. He said, "So brave, good and generous a people deserve well of their government, and I can only express the hope that such action will be taken at the coming Congress in their behalf as may enable the Department to furnish them with the horses and implements which they need. Such a people should not be allowed to perish, and this great Government can afford to be generous and just."

It appeared that the prayers of the Indians, the recommendations of their agent, and the long support of General Miles had finally prevailed when, at the end of May 1883, by permission of the Indian Department and at an expense of \$1,625.00, which Mr. Jordan himself advanced, the Nez Perce started for Idaho and their old home.

Chief Joseph and 118 of his followers who were considered to have been leaders in the hostilities of 1877, however, were not allowed to stop in Idaho, but were taken on to the Colville Indian Reservation in Washington Territory.

In their new location, Chief Joseph again proved his worth as a wise and capable leader. Under his direction, his people soon adjusted themselves to their new surroundings, built homes, and cultivated the fertile land on which they were located. For 12 years, Chief Joseph lived quietly on this reservation, but in 1897, becoming alarmed by what he believed to be new encroachments by the whites on the rights of the Indian, he again took up the defense of his people; this time going to Washington and laying his problems before President William McKinley. Again it was General Miles, who promised him that his people would not be molested in the lands they now occupied.

Returning to the reservation, Chief Joseph settled down to the peace and quiet of old age. He made one more trip to Washington, this time to pay a friendly visit to President Theodore Roosevelt and to his old friend, General Miles. During this journey, he took part in a Western show called "Cummings Indian Congress and Life on the Plains," while it was on exhibit at Madison Square Garden in New York.

About a year after this trip -- on 22 September 1904 -- Chief Joseph dropped dead in front of his tepee; a peaceful ending for this brave Indian military leader.

SUMMARY

Tacticus, a famous historian of ancient Rome (54 - 119 A.D.) said:
"Reason and judgment are the qualities of a leader."

During his struggle against the white man, Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce displayed these qualities in an outstanding manner. Although book-wise he was

an uneducated individual, his inborn wisdom, honesty, courage, common sense, and ability to judge his fellow men, Indian or white, in the light of every day experiences, have set him aside as an excellent leader and disciplinarian.

Americans today can find a good lesson in loyalty when they review the activities of this tribe and the extent to which the Indians were willing to go to protect and preserve the land that they loved and the way of life which they were convinced was best for them. The unfortunate war with the United States in which the Nez Perce engaged in 1877, has never been considered as a blot on their tribal history. American historians consistently praise this tribe for its gallant defense of home, family and native ground.

Few military operations are as difficult as a retreat, and none more so than a retirement under close and constant enemy pressure through hostile territory. This, Chief Joseph accomplished with remarkable generalship. In spite of the fact that in front of him were the troops of Colonel Nelson A. Miles, at his rear, those of General O. O. Howard, and on his flank the forces of Colonel Samuel D. Sturgis and his Indian scouts, he brought his little band -- burdened with women and children -- to within 30 miles of the Canadian border which was his objective.

In 11 weeks, Joseph moved his tribe approximately 1,600 miles, engaged ten separate United States Army commands in 13 battles and skirmishes, and in nearly every instance either defeated them or fought them to a standstill. Chief Joseph had only 300 warriors, yet altogether he faced 5,000 troops.

General William T. Sherman rightfully termed this struggle "one of the most extraordinary Indian wars of which there is any record."

PRESENTATION POINTERS

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b. This Troop Topic is based on one of the great characters of American history. It is designed to be flexible and lends itself to adaptation for presentation in any manner desired by the commander. Utilization of supplemental historical material is encouraged. The leadership qualities of Chief Joseph should be emphasized to provide an object lesson. A map of Chief Joseph's retreat has been included for Vu-Graph use. Members of the audience should be encouraged to read the Troop Topic in its entirety as an off-duty project.

c. Post newspaper publicity is recommended.

d. The front cover of this pamphlet may be posted as a notice of the Troop Information Hour.

